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## THE ESSENCE OF THE CONCEPT “LANGUAGE” IN MICHAEL ALEXANDER KIRKWOOD HALLIDAY’S RESEARCH

**Summary.** This article is a part of a series of articles devoted to the problems of the content of the concept of «language» evolution in the historical aspect (from antiquity to modernity).

The scientific heritage of Michael Alexander Kirkwood Halliday, one of the prominent representatives of The London School of Linguistics (School of Conceptualism), the founder of systemic-functional linguistics and systemic-functional grammar, is of interest for continuing the research of the mentioned problem.

M.A.K. Halliday paid great attention to the consideration of the concept of «language» from different points of view and positions. His theory and descriptions are widely accepted in linguistics.

For our research of the problems of linguistic terminology, namely the understanding of the content of the concept of «language» in a historical aspect, his conception of grammar, lexicogrammar (the term he invented) which is based on a more general theory of language; his examination of the concept of «language» from a social point of view to define a social semiotic resource, which he defined as meaning potential; his vision of the deep connection between «language» and social structure are of our interest.

The article presents research and analysis of M.A.K. Halliday's scientific heritage to identify and systematize his personal point of view and his understanding of the content of the concept. The definition of the concept of «language» based on the identified essential and «principal» meanings (essential groups) of the content of the concept was synthesized.

The informational analysis of the content of the concept «language» was carried out on the basis of the creation of the explanatory formula of concept content and elements of the characteristic structure.

This analysis makes it possible to identify and determine in systematized and generalized interpretations of the concept of «language» the «principal» meanings of the content of the analyzed concept.

According to the received results of the analysis of M.A.K. Halliday's scientific heritage, generalized definitions (interpretations) of the concept of «language» were identified and highlighted, demarcated and systematized, and 7 «principal» meanings that reflected the essence of this concept were revealed.

As a result of the conducted research, in compliance with the scientific requirement of full and monosemantic definitions for the definition of scientific terms and concepts, the generalized definition of the concept of «language» in M.A.K. Halliday's personal understanding was synthesized.

**Key words:** language, explanatory formula of concept content, elements of the characteristic structure, concept.

**The statement of the problem.** This research is a component in the knowledge of the laws and regularities of the evolution

of the concept of «language» content in the life activity of a person and a society in the historical aspect from antiquity to modernity.

The research is motivated and determined by the desire to research and reproduce the concept of «language» in the system of scientific knowledge as fully as possible.

The desire of a person and a society to study regularities, development, and synthesis of a complete and unambiguous definition of the content of the concept of «language» for further use in the system of scientific knowledge is relevant.

*The need for this study is motivated and determined by the desire of people to synthesize complete and unambiguous definitions for scientific and dialectical categories, concepts, and terms at various stages of their development.*

*M.A.K. Halliday's personal interpretation could be used to predict optimal ways of development of this concept over time and trends for the future, which is relevant for the development of not only linguistics but also other sciences.*

**Analysis of the latest researches.** Michael Alexander Kirkwood Halliday (1925–2018), a representative of the London School of Linguistics (School of Conceptualism), relied on the national traditions of British linguistics, studied language in a synchronous plan (synchrony), distinguishing the concepts of structure (syntagmatics) and system (paradigmatics), as well as social aspects of language, was the founder of system-functional linguistics and system-functional grammar.

The study of various aspects of M.A.K. Halliday's work aroused the interest of scientists, but the study of the content of the concept of «language» with the aim of synthesizing a generalized definition of the concept of «language» in M.A.K. Halliday's personal understanding was not done.

**The purpose of the research** is to analyze the personal understanding of the content of the concept of «language» in M.A.K. Halliday's research and generalize the main aspects according to essential, specific features; this allows us to determine the main elements of the characteristic structure.

The research was conducted according to the explanatory formula of concept content (EFCC) [1, c. 32–40].

### **The main tasks of this research:**

– carrying out an informational analysis of the essence of the concept of «language» in the work of *M.A.K. Halliday*;

– identification of the elements of the characteristic structure and their systematization according to the structure of the explanatory formula of concept content (EFCC) for the study of content and structure-forming elements of the concept of «language» from the point of view of the essence and features;

– synthesis of the complete and unambiguous definition of the concept of «language» in the personal understanding of M.A.K. Halliday based on the results of his research.

**The object** of the research is the development of the interpretation of the concept of «language» in communicative relations in society during 5 periods of linguistics (*from antiquity to modernity*).

**The subject** of the research is the analysis of the scientific research of M.A.K. Halliday, a well-known representative of the London Linguistic School, whose activity took place in the 5th period, the last period of linguistics (the 30s of the 20th century to our time) and identification of his understanding the essence of the concept of «language».

**The scientific novelty** of the research consists in the analysis of the scientific works of M.A.K. Halliday, one of the leading European functionalists of the 20th century of the London Linguistic School, with the aim of determining the content of the concept of «language». According to the EFCC a description of the concept of «language» was carried out to reveal the existence of the concept, the phenomenon of its content, the structure with its elements, connections, and relations, presented in a generalized form with a common element inside.

**Analysis of the latest researches.** *The London School of Linguistics (School of Conceptualism) studied «language» in a synchronous plan, distinguishing the concepts of structure and system, as well as social aspects of «language». From the middle of the 19th century, representatives of the school relied on the national traditions of British linguistics, which paid attention to intensive research of «living» languages (especially so-called «primitive» or «exotic» languages of Africa, Asia, and Oceania).*

*Within the framework of this school, the activities of Michael Alexander Kirkwood Halliday (1925–2018) began, one of the leading European functionalists of the 20th century, the founder of systemic-functional linguistics and systemic-functional grammar.*

M.A.K. Halliday, a representative of the London School of Linguistics (School of Conceptualism), relied on the national traditions of British linguistics, studied language in a synchronous plan (synchrony), distinguishing the concepts of structure (syntagmatics) and system (paradigmatics), as well as social aspects of language, was the founder of system-functional linguistics and system-functional grammar.

The linguist founded a scientific direction called Systemic Linguistics and developed a well-known Systemic functional linguistics (SFL) model of language.

Systemic functional linguistics (SFL) considers language as a social semiotic system.

**The presentation of the main material.** For M.A.K. Halliday «The concept of «a language» is too important to be taken for granted ... we have to be careful to specify the nature of this category when we use it.» [2, p. 6].

He considered the concept of «language» from different points of view and showed the complexity, diversity, and ambiguity of this scientific concept, but he did not synthesize his unambiguous generalized definition.

M.A.K. Halliday tried «...to look at language from every possible vantage point» [3, p. 7] and described his work as «...wander[ing] the highways and byways of language» [3, p. 14].

He quoted J. R. Firth's point of view: «As my teacher, J. R. Firth, used to say, if you are a linguist, then language is what you say it is; you are not called upon to define it in simple terms – indeed

*it is far too complex a phenomenon to be defined at all; and you are certainly not bound by any commonsense notions of what language is (still less by moralistic conceptions of what it ought to be!)» [4, p. 7].*

*At this stage of the research, we are interested in connections and relationships within the concept as a system and the structure of the phenomenon of the content of the concept of «language» with its elements. The connections of these elements in the structure and their relationship can be presented in a generalized form with a common element inside.*

*To do this, we will create an explanatory formula for the content of the concept of «language». The description of the concept, category according to essential, specific features will allow determining the main elements of the characteristic structure (the basic characteristic structure of the definitions of information in essence) to determine the Essence of the universal area of being, a part and/or unit of which is the researched concept of «language» according to the scientific works of M.A.K. Halliday.*

### **Explanatory formula of concept content «language».**

*I. Elements of the characteristic structure.*

#### **1. Description of the concept.**

##### **1.1. Description of the concept, category according to the results of the analysis of previous knowledge that related to this concept.**

In our previous articles, we analyzed the understanding and development of the concept of «language» at the previous periods of linguistics:

1st period – V–IV centuries B.C. – 16th century;

2nd period – XVII–XVIII centuries;

3rd period – the end of the 18th – the first half of the 19th century;

4th period – the end of the XIX – the first third of the XX century.

Research results are presented in 9 articles.

##### **1.2. Detection of the existence of the concept, the phenomenon of its essence.**

###### **1.2.1. A social phenomenon.**

Our life is very much dependent on language. M.A.K. Halliday proved deep connections between a language and a social structure, the ability to communicate and social life. Social retains priority in this role.

###### **1.2.1.1. The condition of a person's existence in interaction with other people.**

According to M.A.K. Halliday, «language» is «...not something separate from humanity, but an essential part of the condition of being human» [5, p. 117–118].

###### **1.2.1.2. Creator and creature of human society in interaction.**

M.A.K. Halliday preferred the social point of view and believed that society, language, and personality created an inseparable complex: «... language as the creature and creator of human society» [3, p. 6–7], «...language creates society» as the product of the activity of all society as a whole [3, p. 5].

###### **1.2.1.3. Participant in the social process.**

M.A.K. Halliday admitted that the process of socialization of an individual takes place in society: «...in its global evolution it cannot be other than a participant in the social process». [4, p. 22], indicated the presence of social processes that occur among speakers of different social classes:

1) socialization of the individual;

2) resocialization of the individual.

The purpose of these processes M.A.K. Halliday considered necessity «...to make special kinds of demand on languages» [6, p. 575] «...to create and maintain a social hierarchy with a tendency to associate certain modes of meaning with certain social contexts» [6, p. 575].

#### 1.2.1.4. Outward expression of social actions.

In the process of communication, language acts to meet the needs of man and society:

1) a form of action. In the process of communication language acts “...as a form of action, as the enactment of social relationships and social processes” (Emphasis in the original) [7, p. 273];

2) a form of reflection. Social processes “...stress the culture as the context for language as *system*; and they see language as a form of reflection, as the construal of experience into a theory or model of reality”. (Emphasis in the original) [7, p. 273].

#### 1.2.2. Resource to create and exchange meanings.

Language in the system-functional perspective is seen as a social semiotic resource, means interacting with the eco-social environment to create and exchange meanings and it is important to «...to interpret language not as a set of rules but as a resource...» [2, p. 262].

##### 1.2.2.1. Meaning-forming resource.

M.A.K. Halliday considered that to learn a language is to learn to understand it: «language» is a «meaning-forming resource» [8].

##### 1.2.2.2. Social semiotic resource.

Language in the system-functional perspective is seen as a semiotic tool/resource interacting with the eco-social environment to create and exchange meanings.

M.A.K. Halliday founded the term «Lexicogrammar» to confirm that vocabulary and grammar are parts of the same phenomenon. It is based on a more general theory of language as a social semiotic resource, or «potential for meaning» [9].

##### 1.2.2.3. Resource for enquiring and thinking.

M.A.K. Halliday considered «Philosophical Language» as

1) «...a resource for research and reflection» [4, p. 204];

2) «... a means of arriving at new knowledge, a resource for enquiring and for thinking with» [4, p. 204].

#### 1.2.3. Means/tool/ instrument of encoding/decoding and transmitting information.

Language is not only a means of communication but also of knowledge.

1.2.3.1. Means/ tool of thinking and reflection of psychophysiological processes that occur in the mind of the speakers.

Language allows us to talk about the outside world, and to inform people about things and events that they ignore or want to know.

1) «Philosophical Language» is «... a means of arriving at new knowledge» [4, p. 204];

2) «Language of science» is «... a tool, an instrument for expressing our ideas about the nature of physical and biological processes» [4, p. 202].

He understood various forms of discourse under the language of science, but considered them as «... a system resource for meaning-making, not as a collection of instances of text» [4, p. 49].

«Language of science» has become increasingly «anti-democratic» and «... sets apart those who understand it and shields them from those who do not» [4, p. 225].

1.2.3.2. A means and a tool for limiting scientific and social communication, communication between societies.

M.A.K. Halliday studied language in terms of social orientation and social hierarchy. It implies the foregrounding of the social structure and social hierarchy to wit the «sociolinguistic coding orientation».

The main feature of language is that «... speakers in different task-roles, use different dialects or registers» [2, p. 256].

He established a deep connection between language and social structure; language is not only a part of the social process, but also sociolinguistic coding:

1) «An anti-language» is «...the vehicle of such resocialization» [2, p. 575]. M.A.K. Halliday coined the term «anti-language» as «the means of realization of a subjective reality: not merely expressing it, but actively creating and maintaining it» [6, p. 576]. «An antilanguage may be «high» as well as «low» on the diglossic spectrum» [6, p. 583].

The process of the simultaneous existence in a society of two languages or two different forms of the same language, used in different functional spheres, involves bringing social structures and social hierarchies to the fore.

This involves a preoccupation with the functional relationship between language and social structure and a preoccupation with defining particular understandings of information and knowledge through the ritual functioning of social hierarchy and «...presented at the start brings into sharp relief the role of language as a realization of the power structure of society» [2, p. 285].

2) The language of science «...has become increasingly anti-democratic: its arcane grammatical metaphor sets apart those who understand it and shields them from those who do not» [4, p. 225].

1.2.3.3. An imperfect means of encoding/decoding and information transmission that needs description and normalization.

He believed that the lexical-grammatical system of language is inherently probabilistic, there are often two or more possible interpretations for the same element, and requires description and normalization to ensure authenticity: «At such times there arise proposals for improving language, making it a more effective tool for recording and extending our knowledge» [4, p. 119].

#### 1.2.3.4. A means of learning, access to consciousness and communication of a person in society.

M.A.K. Halliday assigned an important role to teaching and learning languages, knowledge of a subject is encoded and transmitted through language, «learning how to mean» [10, p. 28].

«The study of language – of language in general, and of the particular languages that are valued in the context of our culture – has a central place in the institutional framing of knowledge» [4, p. 23].

#### 1.2.3.5. A means and tool for ensuring authentic recipe, storage, and transmission of information regardless of time and space.

M.A.K. Halliday paid special attention to «a philosophical language», which in his opinion was «not simply a means of writing down, and hence transmitting, knowledge that had already been gained» [4, p.199].

#### 1.2.3.6. A means of learning and preserving cultural and historical experience:

1) «Social semiotic». M.A.K. Halliday was convinced that «language» is «both a part of human history and a realization of it, the means whereby the historical process is construed. This is what we mean by language as «social semiotic» [4, p. 221];

2) Cultural and historical experience. M.A.K. Halliday supported the generally accepted view that the cultural-historical experience of society is part of human history: «In our opinion the history of language is not separate from the rest of human history; on the contrary, it is an essential aspect of it. Human history is as much a history of semiotic activity as it is of socio-economic activity» [4, p. 210].

#### 1.2.3.7. A means of forming intercultural contexts.

M.A.K. Halliday, while analyzing the scientific issues of language and learning, considered language from a cultural point of view (the «national language») through the relationship and differences between the languages «English and Chinese». Since «language» now meant «languages», the perception of this role differed somewhat from one country to another [4].

M.A.K. Halliday argued that new cultural contexts in a particular language tend to change the semantic styles of new speakers of that language: «A particular language co-evolves with a particular culture... And whenever we use our language, all aspects of our culture are invoked» [11, p. 5].

#### 1.2.4. Creation and product of nature:

1.2.4.1. A natural reflection of psychophysiological processes that occur in the mind of speakers so «the label ‘natural’ language is entirely apt» [5, p. 117].

#### 1.2.4.2. A product of natural gradual adaptation (evolution).

Language has played and continues to play a key formative role in the evolution of human consciousness and society.

Language has evolved over time, along with the evolution of the human species, to cope with new conditions of existence and needs: «Language is as much a product of evolution as we are ourselves; we did not manufacture it» [5, p. 117–118].

#### 1.2.5. Language as a system.

M.A.K. Halliday himself noted that from the very beginning of his research activity, the concept of «system» was part of his theory of «language», and the explanation of linguistic phenomena should be sought in the relationships between systems, not between structures [12].

#### 1.2.5.1. An evolved system.

The emergence of «language» according to the historical principle is explained by the needs of the a person’s consciousness, so «language» is evolving during the time, along with the evolution of the human species, to cope with its needs. In his opinion, «a language is an evolved system» [4, p. 224], language is an evolved system: «This system, language, has evolved – along with the human species: it’s the sapiens in homo sapiens» [4, p. 10].

#### 1.2.5.2. A coding system on three levels.

Formally, «language» is a system for encoding information. «Most coding systems are on two levels: a *content* and an *expression*... But language has evolved a third, abstract level of *form* intermediate between the two; it consists of content, form and expression, or, in linguistic terms, of semantics, lexicogrammar and phonology» (Emphasis in the original) [2, p. 256].

#### 1.2.5.3. A semiotic system.

M.A.K. Halliday's approach to language as a semiotic system «not in the sense of a system of signs, but a systemic resource for meaning» [2, p. 260–261] became innovative.

#### 1.2.5.4. A phonetic system.

«...language as a physical system (i.e. system-&-process), taking account of the physical properties of the sound wave» [3, p. 6].

#### 1.2.6. A social semiotic.

According to M.A.K. Halliday, above and beyond «language as system» and «language as institution» lies the more general, unifying concept that he has labeled «language as social semiotic» [13, p. 659–661].

M.A.K. Halliday considered «language as social semiotics», that is, as a system of socially motivated established signs (meanings) that are used to express people’s needs of communication, beliefs, and cultures: «Language is, as we have tried to suggest, both a part of human history and a realization of it, the means whereby the historical process is construed. This is what we mean by language as «social semiotic» [4, p. 221].

#### 1.2.7. Language as form.

M.A.K. Halliday proposed to consider language as «a form of action, as the enactment of social relationships and social processes» [7, p. 273].

**Conclusion.** According to the results of the research, the connections and relations within the concept in a generalized form with the main elements of the characteristic structure inside were presented and the essence of the concept of «language» in M.A.K. Halliday's scientific views was synthesized.

M.A.K. Halliday understood the Essence of the universal area of being, a part and/or unit of which the researched concept of «language» as a social phenomenon and a condition of human existence in interaction with other people; a complex developed information coding system; a meaning-making and social semiotic resource for the creation and exchange of meanings; a creation and product of nature that is in the process of evolution, a natural reflection of psychophysiological processes that occur in the speaker's mind; means of access to consciousness for learning, education, and communication in society; keeping of cultural and historical experience and formation of intercultural contexts; an imperfect means/tool that requires normalization to ensure authentic acquisition, keeping, encoding/decoding and limitation of information transmission in the process of scientific and social communication.

Prospects for further research. The continuation of the analysis and systematization of the content of the concept of «language» on the basis of the creation of the explanatory formula of concept in the 5th period of linguistics (the 30s of the 20th century to our time) is the prospect for our further research.

This will give us the opportunity to trace the process of the further evolution of the concept of «language» in the life activities of people and societies, taking into account historicism.

Based on the results of such research, it will be possible to synthesize a full and monosemantic definition of the concept of «language», which will not conflict with generally accepted ones and become more correct and sufficient at the analyzed stage.

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**Солдатова Л. П. Сутність поняття «мова» у дослідженнях Майкла Олександра Кірквуда Халлідея**

**Анотація.** Ця стаття є складовою частиною циклу статей, присвячених проблемам еволюції сутності поняття «мова» в історичному аспекті (від давнини до сучасності).

Наукова спадщина Майкла Олександра Кірквуда Халлідея, одного з видатних представників Лондонської лінгвістичної школи (школа концептуалізму), засновника системно-функціональної лінгвістики та системно-функціональної граматики, становить інтерес для продовження дослідження зазначеної проблеми.

М. Халлідей приділив багато уваги розгляду поняття «мова» з різних точок зору та позицій. Його теорія та описи отримали широке визнання в мовознавстві.

Для нашого дослідження проблем лінгвістичної термінології, а саме розуміння сутності поняття «мова» в історичному аспекті, становлять інтерес його концепція граматики, лексикограматика, термін, який він винайшов і який базується на більш загальній теорії мови; його розгляд поняття «мови» з соціальної точки зору для визначення соціального семіотичного ресурсу, який він визначав як «потенціал значення»; його бачення глибокого зв'язку між «мовою» та соціальною структурою.

У статті представлені дослідження та аналіз наукової спадщини М. Халлідея для ідентифікації та систематизації його особистої точки зору та розуміння сутності поняття «мова» за суттєвими, специфічними ознаками, які дозволяють визначити основні елементи характеристичної структури. За виявленими суттєвими та «стрижневими» значеннями змісту поняття була синтезована дефініція поняття «мова».

Інформаційний аналіз сутності поняття «мова» був проведений на базі створення тлумачної формули змісту поняття за суттєвими, специфічними ознаками та ідентифікації елементів характеристичної структури.

Цей аналіз дає можливість ідентифікувати та визначити у систематизованих та узагальнених трактуваннях поняття «мова» «стрижневі» значення сутності аналізованого поняття.

Відповідно до отриманих результатів проведеного аналізу наукової спадщини М. Халлідея були виявлені та виділені, розмежовані та систематизовані узагальнені дефініції (трактування) поняття «мова» та виявлено 7 стрижневих значень, які відображали сутність цього поняття.

У результаті проведеного дослідження з дотриманням наукової вимоги однозначності до визначення наукових термінів та понять була синтезована узагальнена дефініція сутності поняття «мова» в особистому розумінні М. Халлідея.

**Ключові слова:** мова, тлумачна формула змісту поняття, елементи характеристичної структури, поняття.